

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01
CIAE-00 COME-00 EPG-02 DODE-00 EB-07 FEAE-00
FPC-01 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
OMB-01 PM-05 USIA-06 OES-07 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04
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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2586
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEGWASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 3999

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EMIN ETRD MO UR
SUBJ: SOVIET-MORROCAN AGREEMENT ON MESKALA PHOSPHATE DEVELOPMENT

REF: MOSCOW 10128

1. DURING ONE HOUR MEETING ALONE WITH PHOSPHATE OFFICE (OCP)
DIRECTOR-GENERAL KARIM LAMRANI ON JULY 18, AMBASSADOR WAS INFORMED
THAT ALL MAJOR DIFFERENCES ARE NOW SETTLED ON THE MESKALA DEAL.
SIGNING IS SCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER TO GIVE EXPERTS TIME TO PUT THIS
COMPLEX TECHNICAL ACCORD IN FINAL FORM. LAMRANI CONFIRMED THAT
THE USSR WOULD BE CALLED UPON TO FINANCE IMPORTS OF WESTERN
EQUIPMENT, BUT STRONGLY DOWNPLAYED THE ROLE OF SOVIET EXPERTS.
THE USSR IS ALSO TO ASSIST CONSTRUCTION OF RAIL LINE FROM
MESKALA TO ESSAOUIRA, WHERE MAJOR PORT FACILITY PLANNED.
INITIALLY MOROCCO IS TO SHIP PHOSPHORIC ACID TO THE
USSR, TO BE FOLLOWED BY MESKALA ROCK SHIPMENTS UPON
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COMPLETION OF PHOSPHORIC ACID PLANTS IN USSR.

2. NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS DEAL BEGAN IN 1969, LAMRANI
RECALLED. DESPITE QUOTE STUBBORN UNQUOTE ATTITUDE
OF SOVIETS, THEIR SERIOUS AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS HAVE
NOW BROUGHT THEM AROUND TO APKEEING TO TERMS ACCEPTABLE
TO OCP. LAMRANI EMPHASIZED EXTENT OF SOVIETJNOOD

PROBLEM QON ASSERTING THAT USSR HAS TWICE AS MUCH AGRICULTURAL LAND AS US BUT HAS BEEN USING ONLY HALF AMOUNT OF FERTILIZER, RESULTING IN A SOIL DEPLETION PROBLEM. WITH AMPLE RESOURCES TO EXPAND NITROGEN AND POTASH PRODUCTION, KEY MISSING ELEMENT IN FERTILIZER PRODUCTION EXPANSION PROGRAM IS ASSURED LONG-TERM SUPPLY OF PHOSPHATE.

3. LAMRANI STASSED SOVIET DEPENDENCE ON MOROCCO IN

THE CRITICAL FOOD AREA RESULTING FROM THIS DEAL, NOTING THE CONSEQUENT SOVIET INTEREST IN MOROCCAN POLITICAL STABILITY. IN HIS DISCUSSIONS IN MOSCOW, LAMRANI HAS ATTEMPTED TO CONVINCE THE SOVIETS THAT

THEIR POLICY IN AFRICA IS MISGUIDED AND IS LEADING TO AN INSTABILITY WHICH IS NOT IN THEIR OWN LONG-TERM INTEREST. LAMRANI BELIEVES THAT HE MAY BE MAKING SOME PROGRESS IN CONVINCING THE SOVIETS THAT LEADERS OF THEIR CLIENT STATES IN BLACK AFRICA ARE ONLY USING USSR ASSISTANCE TO GAIN PERSONAL POWER, AND THAT THESE SAME LEADERS COULD EASILY TURN AGAINST THE SOVIETS.

4. COMMENT: MORROCCANS THUS SEE SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BENEFITS ACCRUING FROM INTENSIFIED COOPERATION WITH THE SOVIETS. THEY CLEARLY EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO CHOOSE
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WESTERN EQUIPMENT AS THEY WISH, TO KEEP THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN MOROCCO TO A MINIMUM, AND TO DEVELOP SOVIET SUPPORT FOR MOROCCAN POLITICAL STABILITY. ANOTHER UNSTATED HOPE IS TO ENSURE SOVIET NEUTRALITY ON SAHARA ISSUE AND PERHAPS SOME MODERATION OF SOVIET MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ALGERIA. ONLY TIME WILL TELL TO WHAT EXTENT THIS OPTIMISM IS WARRANTED.
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